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January 9, 2003

TO: EACH SUPERVISOR

FROM: P. MICHAEL FREEMAN

### **DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION UPDATE**

As requested, we are providing a six-month update on the Fire Department reorganization that was implemented July 1, 2002. As requested by Supervisor Knabe in the Board meeting held April 30, 2002, this update will focus on "...the effectiveness of the non-uniformed personnel in relation to outreach in the communities".

The reorganization was implemented to achieve the goal of bringing the Department closer to the communities we serve and was accomplished within budget at no additional cost. Three operational regions were established, with a Deputy Chief moved to a location within each region. Uniformed personnel were shifted from centralized functions located at Fire Department Headquarters: a Public Information Officer (PIO), a Training and Safety Captain, and a Community Services Unit Captain are now located within each region.

Another significant change has been the development of the Community Services Representative (CSR), a non-uniformed position intended to increase the outreach and contact with the cities and unincorporated areas of the County. The implementation of this position has been a significant success, as evidenced by letters and comments from city staff and community leaders.

During their first few weeks, the CSRs were participating in an intensive training academy; therefore, they have only been working within the communities for approximately four months. However, within that brief period of time, they have succeeded in their role as liaison far beyond what we had projected.

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During the Williams Fire of Fall 2002, a 40,000-acre fire of two weeks duration in the San Gabriel Mountains, the CSRs were tireless in their contacts with residents and city officials. We received many compliments on their communication skills and professionalism. The Mayor of San Dimas sent a letter noting: "Your staff kept us informed and they were accessible throughout the event. We appreciate their patient follow through and responsiveness to keep us informed and current." The City Manager of the City of Azusa wrote to the San Gabriel Valley Tribune "...As City Manager, I've been extraordinarily impressed by the direct, honest, and timely communication and cooperation we received from [the County Fire Department] regarding the Williams Fire..." The CSRs were a constant presence interfacing with the seven communities affected by the fire, thousands of residents, and the media.

As recently as this week, the assistance and information provided by the local CSR during the fires in Malibu proved invaluable to the city staff as well as the residents and media. Were it not for the CSR, there would have been a significant communication gap, as the local PIO was needed to work directly with the media and was therefore not available for the press and local government officials.

Supervisor Knabe noted his appreciation of the assistance provided by two of the CSRs in the planning of his Public Safety Appreciation Luncheon. He states "My staff informs me they were an asset to the Planning Committee..."

Because the Department used to rely on the Assistant Fire Chiefs (AFCs) to interface with the communities as well as manage their emergency operations responsibilities, there was intense competition for their time. With the reorganization and the CSRs, the AFCs are now able to devote more time and focus to emergency service and preparedness, as well as greater oversight of their respective divisions. The AFCs have been very open in their praise for the work of the CSRs and their role in the regions, and have been working very closely with the CSRs to ensure the CSRs' continued success.

We are pleased to report that overall, the reorganization has been a success, addressing each of the goals we set forth in the original proposal. To reiterate, it was accomplished within our established budget with no additional costs incurred. The Fire Department has a stronger presence in the communities we serve; executive management is closer to city government officials as well as to the fire fighters in the field; and we have experienced an increase in programs, educational materials, and information being distributed throughout the communities.

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Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

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